

In the May 6, 1976 issue of *New Scientist*, the London *Times* placed a unique advertisement. It consisted of two words. They dramatically called attention to the image the *Times* is promoting: "News Scientist". I'm sure that the author of this ad intended a play on words with the journal's title. But, perhaps the pun was more relevant than the author imagined.

This advertisement interested me because I am frequently asked, since it is not obvious, how I earn my living. When I tell someone I am an information scientist, the person invariably responds with a blank expression. The situation is not necessarily remedied by my explanation that information science is the science of processing information.

We information scientists come in a wide variety these days. Some of us belong to the American Society of Information Science. Others may be found in the Association of Computing Machinery, or the American Chemical Society--not to mention the various library associations. But we all take pride in our work, just as doctors and

lawyers do. The problem is that there are no common household names for what we do.

The possibilities are few, but it seems that the originator of "News Scientist" may have offered a more likely choice. The term might even be used to describe the new breed of investigative journalist, born of the Watergate era, who needs a label to distinguish his profession that the word "journalist" may never achieve. Certainly, science news reporters deserve a job description more precise than "science writer." And probably the term information scientist will be increasingly identified with computer science.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to use the two words news and scientist together without blending them into the misleading hybrid "news-scientist." So, it is difficult to imagine that the name will ever be in popular use. But stranger things have happened.

It intrigues me that no other term is easily substituted. After reading so much about the CIA in the news recently, I am reminded that I once called my work "sci-

ence intelligence." In fact, over twenty years ago, Robert Hayne and I wrote a paper which I read at the 1955 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The paper was entitled "Needed--A National Science Intelligence and Documentation Center."<sup>1</sup> It was inevitable and probably fortunate that our proposal was not taken seriously. The term "science intelligence" was ill-fated because of the increasingly unsavory connotations of "intelligence" of any kind. Even DuPont, which once had an intelligence department, and other private firms diligently avoided the word, as the public increasingly associated the term with the Pentagon, the CIA, the FBI, and covert activities.

So, we continue to search for a way to designate the profession that is emerging to deal with the enormous mass of scientific and other information that affects our daily lives. Our need has never been greater to know about science, advances in scientific research, and the use of tax dollars to finance this research. In a recent article called "How Our Science Bank Could Go Bust,"<sup>2</sup> reprinted

in this issue of *Current Contents*<sup>®</sup>, Adam Smith makes a similar point. He illustrates the need to integrate scientists, legislators, and taxpayers in a society so affected by science. If, as he says, we have no scientist Congressmen, no scientist judges, no scientist TV figures, and few "scientist authors who can reach a general public," then something must be done to legitimize the profession that was conceived to effectively inform us about science.

Call them what you will--I doubt that the contributions of serious "news scientists" will suffer from our indecisive nominalism. It would just be so much more convenient if we could agree upon something to call them now. It would be fun if one could look 100 years into the future to find out what term will have evolved. If the world turns into the type of society Orwell forecasted by 1984, then we will not have to worry about what we call information or news scientists. Since I remain optimistic about the future, maybe we can look forward to the time when information and news scientists will be as recognizable as any other kind of scientist.

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## REFERENCES

1. **Garfield E. & Hayne R.** Needed: A national science intelligence and documentation center. Paper presented at a Symposium on Storage and Retrieval of Scientific Information, Annual Meeting of the AAAS, 28 December 1955, Atlanta, Georgia.
2. **Smith A.** How our science bank could go bust. *New York* 9(23):88, 5 July 1976.